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7 Tips for Training Hiking Muscles

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Jul 5, 2011 Misty Faucheux Comments



When the temperature reading gets above 60 or 70 degrees, you immediately start thinking about taking a hike. So, you head out to your nearest trail and go for a 5 mile hike, only to go home to sore shins and thighs.

During the long winter months, your only exercise may be reaching for the bag of chips on your end table. When you are ready to start taking on summer hikes, however, your muscles are out of shape just as much as you feel out of shape. You have to train your hiking muscles to tackle the more difficult trails.

Talk to the Doc

Before you attempt any type of serious or extended physical activity, get an exam. Your doctor knows best if you can even tackle that 100 mile strenuous hike.

Go Slow, My Friend

You shouldn't start off with that strenuous hike right off the bat. Try a few easier hikes first, and build up your strength and endurance. Think of hiking as cardio: you would start off with Tae Bo if you've never exercised a day in your life.

Start off with a 1/2 mile or 3/4 mile, and then work your way up to 1 to 2 mile longer hikes, before starting multiday hikes. If you plan on hiking every day, be sure to schedule in rest days to recover.

Treat It Like a Work Schedule

To really build up your strength, you need to establish a routine. Hike at least five days a week. It doesn't matter when you hike as long as you are hiking. Take a hike before or after work and definitely before you flip on the TV.

Bad Weather is No Excuse

If it's raining, hailing or sleeting, you have to act like your mailman. You still have to keep training your hiking muscles. Switch out the outdoors for something like a stairmaster or treadmill. Turn on the TV, or blare your favorite tunes if this gets tedious.



Just Water Please

Since you are starting off with extremely short hikes, you don't need to carry a whole lot of gear. Just bring some water and a first aid kit in case you injure yourself. You want your pack to be as light as possible so you can build up some strength. Don't weigh yourself down, which can increase your chances of falling and hurting yourself.

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Grab Your Gear

Once you are able to easily do 2 and 3 mile hikes, start adding a lot more gear to your pack, especially if you are planning on an all day hike. You must carry all essentials with you, including food, water, safety gear and clothes. Try adding a few items at a time to your pack on the shorter hikes until your muscles get comfortable with the additional weight.

Find Out if You're Ready

Before you actually head out on an extremely long hike, test your endurance. Pack up your backpack with all the gear that you plan on taking. Head to a trail or area that is the same distance as the hike, but which has easier terrain. Do the hike, and see how you feel. If your muscles are aching and you're not feeling too well, you need to train some more before your actual hike.



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